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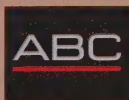
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editorial

Dole is not a lifestyle choice

Let's face it. Anyone who believes that people make what George Osborne has called a "lifestyle choice" to live on benefits has never themselves had that experience.

As the blind child of blind parents, I was brought up on The Dole. Trust me. It was, and is no picnic.

In my father's day – and we're talking mid to late 20th century here – claiming state benefit was a degrading and Dickensian experience. The assumption, then, as now, is that you, the disabled person, were trying to get one over. Whereas the perception from the other side was that they were trying to keep you from getting that to which you were properly entitled. That same battle continues today.

Each school holiday, when my sister and I came home from blind school, my dad was required to take us up to the National Assistance Board office to prove that we were now living at home and that the family needed the additional money required to meet the cost of

supporting us.

Even with that top up, funds would often not stretch as far as the same day next week leaving a period of time when we were expected, it seemed, to live on air.

“The assumption, then, as now, is that you, the disabled person, were trying to get one over”

You may argue that was then and things are better now. But that's not borne out by the experience of those living on, for instance, Incapacity Benefit. One recipient I know gets around £90 per week. He struggles to fill his time, and can't afford the kind of lifestyle that would alleviate having that much time on your hands. His disabling conditions render choosing work as an alternative unviable.

Who can say that he's chosen to live this way. Ask yourself, would you give up your job, if you have one, for 90 quid a week?

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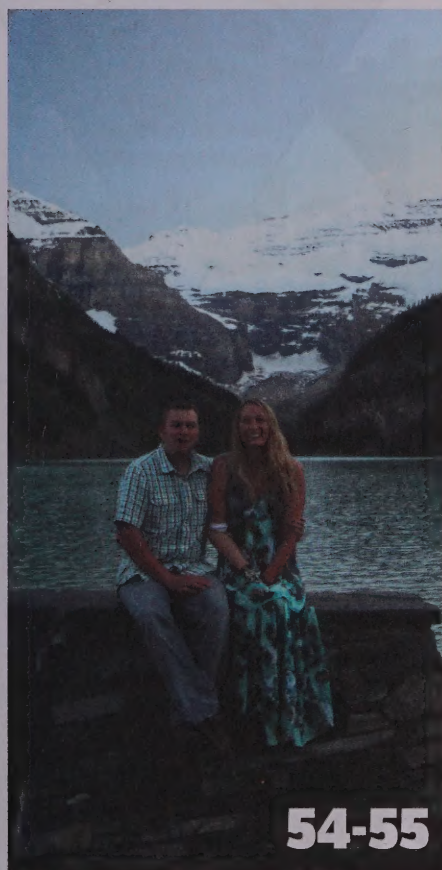
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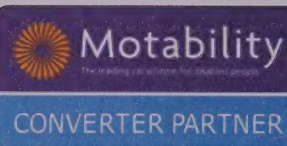
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newsview

Anti-cuts coalition ponders full merger

Ian Macrae

Three organisations that have already formed a coalition protesting at planned cuts to welfare and benefit spending by the Government are now consulting their members on the possibility of a more formal merger.

The organisations are RADAR (the Royal Association on Disability Rights), Disability Alliance (DA) and the National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL).

Each believes that it would benefit from the others' breadth of expertise according to Neil Coyle, Director of Policy with DA.

"NCIL, RADAR and DA have mutual interests", he told *Disability Now*. "We're each trying to tackle inequality in disabled people's lives and our primary audience is disabled people."

"To have three different set-ups for the same audience means sometimes we duplicate effort."

"The combined effort would be more than the



DA's Neil Coyle: "This is not a takeover in some fancy corporate sense"

sum of its parts."

Such mergers elsewhere in the charity and disability sectors have been viewed with some suspicion by service users, where one charity is perceived as dominant and thought to be "hoovering up" smaller organisations. But this is not what's going on here, Coyle insists.

"Each of the partners has a specific expertise and reputation. The aim of working together is to build on those reputations so that we go further as a collective entity. This is not a takeover in some fancy corporate sense."

The other side of that

coin is the possible loss of individual, well-established and recognised identities – what these days we must call "brand".

"Disability Alliance is massively keen to ensure that there is no risk to our core audience," Coyle replies. "We want to ensure that the *Disability Rights Handbook* [DA's primary publication] is known by, available to and accessible to disabled people and their supporters. There is no intention to lose any of the products and expertise these three organisations have. This is about building on those products and generating more different and useful

products and services."

When it comes to the current round of proposed cuts by the other coalition, the Conservative/LibDem Government, Coyle's tone is less optimistic and welcoming.

"With half of working-age disabled adults not being in work and disabled people being disproportionately represented in benefit take-up, any change to benefit will affect disabled people disproportionately, so there's a greater risk to disabled people than other citizens."

"Our primary aim is to break the link between disability and poverty. This Government will be increasing disability poverty by forcing some people off Disability Living Allowance and potentially lowering the rate of Employment Support Allowance [ESA], making it more difficult to get ESA, which is supposed to help specifically disabled people find and seek work."

"If we go on to consider the between 25 and 40 per cent cuts to local authority spending, we can also expect massive changes to social care."

"We would like to see initiatives that support disabled people into work given priority before looking at cutting people's benefits when there isn't work available."

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Assessors not fit for **tougher** benefit tests

Cathy Reay

Health professionals trained to carry out assessments of disabled people claiming benefits "do not know the first thing about disability", according to ex-National Health Service (NHS) staff.

Nurses, doctors and physiotherapists whose job it is to assess disabled people across the country for Disability Living Allowance and Employment Support Allowance (previously Incapacity Benefit) are massively under-qualified for their roles, former NHS employees allege.

Teresa White*, who used to be a NHS nursing manager, told *Disability Now*: "At the moment there are adverts in the nursing press for benefits assessors and I know that nurses applying for these roles will have had barely any formal training on disability.

"I fear these assessors don't understand; they're not in my body and they can't see how it works. They are simply ticking a box. How can they decide how much money I need?

"I had a physio student



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once who said to me 'I didn't know adults could have cerebral palsy'. While there are overarching similarities within each disability group, how

specific conditions affect individuals is unique. Why is it assumed that you can be so blanketed in the way you treat patients with disabilities?"

Sandy Bould*, who claims she was recently told by the NHS she had become too disabled to continue working for them, fears her DLA being taken away from her by people who "do not care about your disability, they just see the money".

"These assessors can make whatever you say whatever they want to hear. They will look at each case with the standing orders of 'we'll turn as many down as we can'. These people are employed not to say we're worthy but to get rid of us. I don't trust them at all," she said.

The concerns come one month before the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is due to announce a spending cut which is expected to include a reformation of the benefits system, meaning thousands of disabled people across the country are likely to be reassessed in order to stay on their benefits or, worse, cut off completely.

Ms Bould continues: "When I first applied for DLA I was turned down. I spoke to an MP who told me 'everyone gets turned down the first time; you'll only get it if



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you fight'. It took me two years to eventually get it, but given the way things are now I have no idea whether I'll be able to keep it."

A spokeswoman for Atos Healthcare, the company which employs medical professionals to carry out disability benefits assessments on behalf of the DWP, said: "Atos Healthcare provides comprehensive training and continuing medical educational support for all its doctors and nurses, which is agreed by the

DWP. The training focuses on preparing healthcare professionals to look at what a person can do, not only what they cannot, in order to assess and support people into work, appropriate to their circumstance.

"Atos Healthcare regularly runs recruitment campaigns for doctors and nurses to ensure that it has the best qualified staff to conduct the assessments under its contract with the DWP."

Disability benefits assessors get somewhere

between four and 19 days training in Incapacity Benefit Personal Capability Assessments depending on their level of experience. A spokesman for the DWP said: "All healthcare professionals have their work audited until it is demonstrated that their work meets the required standards."

Iain Duncan Smith, the work and pensions secretary, has commissioned an investigation into reforming the benefits system, the details of which are expected to be

announced at the Spending Review on 20 October.

Duncan Smith has previously said that he would like to see benefits reduced into one single payment, although the opposition has argued that such a move would cost £7 billion. It is understood, however, that as part of the reforms the DWP will encourage as many benefit recipients as possible to return to work.

*names changed to protect identity

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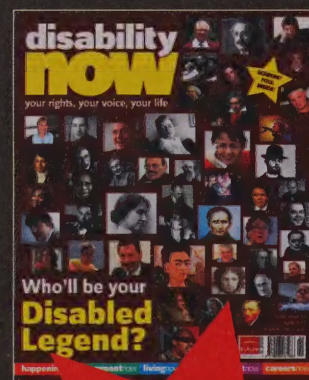
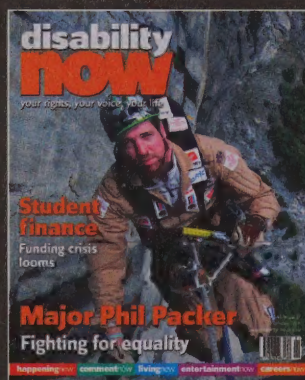
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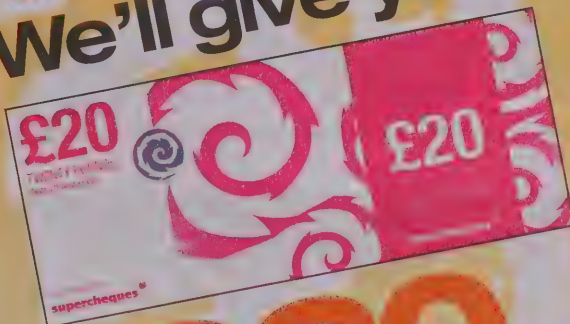
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ruthpatrick



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With the Government's policy reform agenda in full swing, says **Ruth Patrick**, attention is turning to yet another area where the effect on disabled people will be disproportionate

Currently, social housing tenants are granted a "secure tenancy", giving them considerable rights and the confidence that, providing they keep to the terms of their tenancy, their house is theirs to keep. Implicitly criticising this status quo, David Cameron said: "At the moment we have a system very much where, if you get a council house or an affordable house, it is yours forever and in some cases people actually hand them down to

their children."

He went on to suggest that a better approach might be to regularly review tenancies, to see if the tenant's situation had changed such that they could afford private renting, or move to a smaller home. The suggestion is very clear – if your situation has altered perhaps you should be encouraged, or even compelled, to move to a smaller house, or out of the social housing sector altogether.

Cameron has promised a consultation paper to

explore possibilities for making tenancies in social housing more flexible – a euphemism for less secure. It is critical that the case is made against such a move.

Most importantly, it is socially unjust to further reduce the rights of social housing tenants, which includes some of the poorest and most vulnerable in society today.

Disabled people are twice as likely as non-disabled people to live in social housing, and so any changes would affect this group disproportionately.

Stacks of research show that the best social housing estates are those with low turnover of residents, where a sense of place and community becomes established. Changing the social housing offer so that tenancies are provided for shorter periods would only increase the disharmony and problems on some social housing estates. Further, changes could create an "aspiration trap" as people would be fearful about accepting a job if that might put their home at risk. Cameron is quite right that there are real problems with the size of the council

housing waiting list (at 1.8 million and growing) but to suggest that addressing this requires a reduction in the rights of the poorest is both mischievous and wrong. What is really needed is a concerted effort to increase housing supply and measures to provide affordable, decent housing for all, as the charity, Shelter argues.

“Disabled people are twice as likely as non-disabled people to live in social housing, and so any changes would affect this group disproportionately”

On a different theme, the Government repeatedly voices its commitment to getting people off welfare and into work. Well, I've got an idea for them. Why not kickstart the economy, and get the country working, by commissioning the biggest programme of social housing construction since World War II?

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disabilityrights

Further discomfort for Leonard Cheshire

Earlier this year, a man living in a Leonard Cheshire care home was found to have suffered institutional abuse by senior managers. **Professor Peter Beresford** wonders how things could have got so bad

Doug Paulley is a 32-year-old disabled man who lives in a Leonard Cheshire Disability (LCD) residential care home, in a service that costs £1,000 a week. Earlier this year an inquiry in Leeds, where the LCD home is located, concluded that he had been subjected to "institutional abuse" by senior managers.

As *Disability Now* reported in March 2009 ("Cheshire discomforts"), Doug Paulley fell foul of LCD staff from 2006 onwards for asserting residents' rights. Over a period of time, senior managers wrote about him in an offensive manner, as well as describing as "blackmail" his wish to be refunded after LCD had overcharged him for using the home's minibus and even suggesting using fake bureaucratic barriers to stop him taking a holiday he had already booked.

When Paulley tried to view what had been written about him, the charity made efforts not to divulge its correspondence, bringing Paulley and LCD into a renewed dispute.

Eventually he challenged LCD and won. The



Information Commissioner found the organisation to be in breach of the Data Protection Act for failing to "respond adequately to a request for access to information from one of its service users". Paulley was found to have been "denied the opportunity of correcting what may be inaccurate or misleading personal data about him".

Matters then deteriorated further. According to Paulley, LCD not only refused to make a public apology but, in the middle of setting up a mediation process, served him with an eviction notice.

"They gave two grounds," he says. "First was that they

couldn't meet my needs. But I've lived at the home for nine years and [my needs] haven't significantly changed. Second [was] that my behaviour wasn't acceptable. They've refused to say what was wrong with my behaviour. Later they claimed I'd coerced other residents into supporting me."

But the support was real. One resident who wrote in Paulley's defence spoke of being "very upset about Doug Paulley being evicted ... He has had no bad influence on me and other residents ... The staff also get on with Doug ... He also does a lot of good for the home, as in raising cash etc.

for the residents' fund and he has also stood up for other residents in the past."

When asked to comment on the distress Doug says he has experienced, an LCD spokesperson said: "The charity simply has nothing further to add relating to this matter." It insists that it has "not evicted anyone and the charity would like to make that absolutely clear".

It appears, however, that LCD did serve Social Services with an eviction notice (it chose not to serve the notice on Paulley directly) which he challenged under the Human Rights Act. The notice was then suspended, but not rescinded, and Paulley has been advised that another is to be served.

The effect, he says, is that "I haven't been able to plan anything, anything long term, just living day by day. It's resulted in a mental health crisis ... I'm being inspected all the time." The reason, he guesses, is: "I've been singled out for being articulate and relatively confident and having the ability to challenge things. So many other people can't, or daren't, or some combination of the two."

Proud history

Leonard Cheshire Disability draws on a proud history: the reputation of the RAF bomber commander who worked to create new kinds of residential services for disabled people after the war. By the time of Lord Cheshire's death in 1992, the organisation he had founded had grown into a worldwide network.

Inevitably, LCD grew more businesslike but, according to Paulley, the introduction of "high salaries for senior staff" was

accompanied by "a loss of purpose and key values for service users".

Errors of judgement occurred. One was LCD's decision to close down its award-winning "service user support team", 26 out of 30 of whom were disabled. This came in for heavy criticism because the team offered support, advocacy and empowerment services that weren't available elsewhere, and because they were not consulted in advance.

There have also been staff departures, disagreements about further large-

scale staffing cuts, and a large and growing deficit. In May of this year, LCD's Chief Executive Officer, Eric Prescott, resigned after just 18 months.

The "institutional abuse" Doug Paulley says he has suffered seems to be part of a systemic problem. LCD talks about campaigning "with disabled people to break down the physical, social and attitudinal barriers that prevent genuine equality" but in fact contributes to those problems. The Doug Paulley case illustrates this.

Meanwhile, although the Charity Commissioners have asked for a copy of the minutes of Paulley's case conference from the local authority's Safeguarding Adults Partnership Support Unit, the handing over of the review has been postponed because LCD has challenged the finding's legitimacy. It has also withdrawn its threat of eviction but Doug's situation remains open, leaving him in limbo. LCD needs to resolve this situation satisfactorily but it also needs to put its own house in order.

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mediawatch

By Cathy Reay

Red top "Cheats" crusade fuels hate

The Sun newspaper has launched a campaign in partnership with the coalition Government to eradicate benefit fraud, but disabled people say they have never felt more threatened. **Cathy Reay** reports

It is no secret to anyone that the UK currently faces a huge deficit and that cuts across spending must be made. As part of their plan to save money, it is almost certain that the coalition Government will reduce or cut benefits for the elderly and disabled.

Last month *The Sun*, the biggest selling newspaper in the UK, declared "war" on people who are "robbing hard-working *Sun* readers of their cash" by claiming benefits instead of earning their own living. The article claimed the campaign was endorsed by Prime Minister David Cameron.

The piece encouraged *Sun* readers to report "benefit scroungers" to their special hotline. Cheats are people who, according to the tabloid newspaper, "cannot be bothered to find a job or they claim to be sick when they are perfectly capable of work because they prefer to sit at home watching widescreen TVs – paid for by YOU."

The tone of the article sent shockwaves through the disabled community. Lisa Egan, blogger for Where's The Benefit? (wheres-thebenefit.blogspot.com), is

The screenshot shows the front page of The Sun newspaper's website. The masthead at the top left reads "THE Sun" with the date "Monday 13 September 2010". Navigation links include "HOME", "MY SUN", "SITE MAP", "NEWS ALERTS", "Sun Kids", "What's On", "Gay Now", and "CONTACT US". A banner at the top right promotes "Click here for lunchtime entertainment" and "Oasis Lunchtime bites". The main headline reads "Help us stop £1.5bn benefits scroungers". Below the headline is a photograph of a couple, Jaimie and Chris Kent, sitting on a sofa with their children. A caption below the photo reads: "‘We live nicely on benefits’ ... Kent couple Jaimie and Chris show off their luxuries – and say they’d like more cash". To the left of the main content is a sidebar menu with categories: VIDEO NEWS, SPORT, SHOWBIZ, TV, and LIVE IT WOMAN. To the right is another banner for "Click here for lunchtime entertainment" and "Oasis Lunchtime bites".

completely horrified: "It made me paranoid. I wanted to nail my curtains shut so people drinking in the pub opposite my flat wouldn't notice me typing away and report me to *The Sun* for having the audacity to own a computer."

Fellow blogger and disability activist Naomi Jones agrees: "Already, many of us feel like we're going to be reported for ordinary activities. The rate of hate crime towards disabled people is now rising, and it seems likely that this is

linked to these 'campaigns' and misinformation about benefit fraud in the media. I'm increasingly nervous of leaving my house and I don't want this to get any worse."

"Partnering" the campaign with the coalition Government, under unspecified terms, has also made people wonder whether *The Sun* has a hidden agenda.

Naomi explains: "If this really is a partnership with the Government then the Tories have a great deal to answer for, and I'd very much like to hear what their

reasoning is for this potential incitement to hate crime. The Government needs at the very least to clarify its role in this campaign, and its official response."

"A lot of people, including *Sun* readers, lost a lot in the recession. The Government is using benefit claimants as a scapegoat for the country's financial problems. *The Sun* sees [the partnership] as a way of boosting the egos of their readers, thus boosting their readership, by attacking the people perceived as responsible for all the losses

the readers felt," says Lisa.

Terri Smith says she relies completely on incapacity benefit as she is unable to work. She says: "Linking [this] as a partnership with the Government hints at tacit approval at the highest level for this campaign.

"The labelling of every benefit claimant as undeserving and guilty of fraud until proved innocent is very Victorian and just a short step away from what's actually being said in this piece."

Stephen Brookes, journalist and disability and

equality consultant, says he was shocked at the language used in *The Sun's* report. "It makes it clear that disabled people are known as cheats. I despair of journalists who didn't even bother to look at the issue and just copied the press release.

"It seems to be Government policy to demean disabled people to a point where everyone will question the benefits they are entitled to receive. They're out to get disabled people in the meanest way possible."

Disability Now reader Holly Turner adds: "It makes

me feel sad that our country is becoming a nation of spies. Instead of supporting our neighbours we are being encouraged to spy on them. Instead of looking out for the most vulnerable in our society, the Government and *The Sun* have started a campaign which makes them feel guilty, ashamed, paranoid and afraid."

But it is retired disabled reporter Chris Leak who has

the final word: "Root out the scroungers by all means. But if anyone with half a brain thinks that many disabled people would not swap whatever allowances they get for full health they are very much mistaken."

• Read *The Sun's* original article online at: thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/features/3091717/The-Sun-declares-war-on-Britains-benefits-culture.html

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politics

Tributes follow Jade's early death

An activist in many areas and chair of Equality 2025, the loss of Rowen Jade at an early age is lamented.

Ian Macrae reports

Friends and colleagues have paid tribute to Rowen Jade, chair of the Government's Equality 2025 disability advisory group who died last week aged 40.

Baroness [Jane] Campbell of Surbiton told *Disability Now*, "it's her warmth as a person that I know everyone will miss the most. Her genuine devotion to disabled people, combined with her smile that would brighten up any room, was priceless.

"Rowen touched people's lives in a way that changed their perceptions of the art of the possible and in doing so, safeguarded our humanity. I feel so very lucky and privileged to have been a close friend, and desperately sorry that she has died so young."

Minister for Disabled People, Maria Miller also paid tribute: "This is a huge loss not just to Equality 2025 but for the disability movement as a whole. For many years Rowen has been a great advocate for disabled people and she will

be sorely missed."

Having been a member of Equality 2025 since its inception, she was appointed its chair in 2008.

Fellow member and *Disability Now* regular columnist Andy Rickell said: "Rowen had shown herself to be the embodiment of independent living, in the way the movement sees it – achieving choice and control over her life enough to play a role in positively influencing the quality of life of millions of disabled people. Her personal presence charmed ministers and her personal commitment and ability as an advocate for disabled people's rights encouraged them to see it our way.

"It was great to have such a capable personal ally, equally committed to achieving disabled people's equality by taking advantage of the opportunity to enter the corridors of power from which disabled people have been historically excluded."

Tracey Proudlock was a member of Not Dead Yet UK alongside Rowen Jade. She said: "Earlier this year



there was a BBC Radio 2 feature on assisted suicide. Jeremy Vine said that Rowen was waiting on the

“Rowen had shown herself to be the embodiment of independent living, in the way the movement sees it – achieving choice and control over her life”

line and my whole day picked up in an instant. I was bursting with pride that I knew this woman, and delighted as I knew she would persuasively and persistently get our point

across. It was clearly a great effort for her to speak on the phone and get her voice amplified over the radio but no one was in any doubt about her message. There was never any anger, just a very confident message that disabled people were threatened by calls to legalise assisted suicide and changing the law would be dangerous.

"The many campaigns that Rowen supported cannot be allowed to weaken because she's not with us anymore. I'm sure I am not alone when I say that I feel stronger and more confident because of Rowen – she has touched and taught us so very well."

→ Have your say

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worldview

Bollywood: fantasy and reality

Psychologist, academic, feminist,
disability activist and film buff

Dr Anita Ghai radiates love of her subject when she talks about disability and sexuality in Bollywood. As befits this melodramatic genre her love affair with Bollywood has its share of frustrations and disappointments as well as moments of bliss



KELLY MULLAN

Five songs, three fight scenes, two tear-jerker moments and a couple of comic scenes; this is the “Masala” formula of mechanical Bollywood cinema (or rather DVD as access is not there for cinemas).

Films are a reflection of society and ideologies are inherent in film and TV. Disabled people are marginalised in Hindi society and are marginalised in Hindi film. As an activist I want to change this as it influences attitudes.

Paradoxically, disability is highly visible but not explored. There’s no recognition of the human potential of disabled people.

Disabled film extras are used to evoke emotional reactions: for example, a fleeting scene of a crippled beggar leaning into the star’s car, or the star helping a blind person across the road.

Images of disability are deep rooted in culture and social anxiety about the human body.

It’s a defence to think: “It’s someone else’s problem.” And people don’t want to get into thinking mode at the cinema.

Bollywood films are fantasies of perfection about beauty and macho images but disability has its place. Any actor playing a disabled character overcoming adversity wins an award.

Typically if the star marries a beautiful blind girl, she’ll be cured by the end. In another plot the amputee feels he must leave the beautiful girl: she then tries to get her leg cut off to be with him. Then there’s the cultural stereotype of the bad guy with the eye-patch. And speech problems are exploited for comic effect so there are issues of laughter and power.

Black, a Bollywood film based on the Helen Keller story, is really problematic for me. Many disabled people had an enthusiastic response and there are parts which touch on my experience but mostly I hated it. The deafblind student asks her teacher for

a kiss, he can’t handle this and leaves, and she sadly concludes “maybe I’ve asked too much from life”. How is asking for a kiss asking too much from life?

There is so much silence about sexuality and disability that you end up silencing yourself. Up to the age of 28 I did not allow myself any of the emotions related to my sex life – because I knew this was not allowed.

I see this repression a lot through my work researching relationships between mothers and their disabled daughters. It’s fascinating. The repression: don’t think about it! This is why I love the psychoanalytical.

In India’s patriarchal

society, it is worse to be a disabled woman than a disabled man. Arranged marriages are very important. Sexuality is tied to marriage and marriage is not accessible. There are clear gender differences. A disabled man can marry a poor woman.

In *Sparsh* (pictured right), the drama is set in a blind school. It's about the relationship between the blind principal and a widow. (Widow remarriage is difficult.) The actress says "my life is meaningful now I am with you" and refers to "doing my duty". So marrying a disabled person is doing your duty? That's enough to put an arrow through anyone's heart!

Disabled people are often infantilised into adulthood so parents make their kids a burden as they don't give them opportunities. I see parents who give love and support but not autonomy.

Paa is a film about a disabled child and his relationship with his mother and his father. There is a lot of mother blaming in India which pains me. The mother is blamed if the child is a girl or if the child is disabled. I've heard of a mother-in-law who refused to even visit her daughter-in-law when she had a third daughter. A disabled daughter is an even greater curse. There is prenatal selection with abortion allowed for



disabled fetuses.

Mothers want hysterectomies for disabled daughters for fear of pregnancy. They have no confidence of protecting their daughters from abuse and the hysterectomies are,

it seems to me, a way of legitimising abuse. In a slum a mother would not let her daughter be taken to an institution even though she was being abused by her father. She justified her decision by saying: "At least

here she is only abused by one person."

Class is very important in Indian society. The majority of disabled women are in extreme poverty. Better off disabled people have the resources but sometimes wealthier mothers will hide their disabled child because of prestige.

In *Sixth Happiness* the mother takes her son to his father's workplace and his colleagues are surprised because he has never mentioned him. *Sixth Happiness* is a wonderful autobiographical film and includes a bisexual love triangle. It was made in London. It would never have been made in Bollywood.

Sixth Happiness has a disabled star but there aren't any disabled performers in Bollywood. The problem comes from not realising that disabled people are capable.

Of 30 million disabled children only seven per cent are in education. There are reserved places for disabled students in universities but this is only a slogan. We've only recently been allowed to join the civil service although thank God I wasn't allowed to become a civil servant when I wanted to apply!

• Dr Anita Ghai was talking to Kelly Mullan at a trailblazer event for DaDaFest (Disability and Deaf Arts) in Liverpool.

one2watch



Dancing Dan The wizard from Oz

Dan Daw says he has a love affair with dance and that choreography is like childbirth. He had no idea that he could dance professionally as a disabled man until he connected with Restless Dance Company in Adelaide, Australia who were the driving force behind his "stagger" onto the international stage. Now on tour with Candoco Dance Company's *Renditions*, Dan Daw takes on these "awesome" questions.

What's the best thing about being disabled?

Watching people's faces as the cogs turn when I use the words "dance" and "disability" in the same sentence – priceless!

What funny things get said about your impairment?

My favourite is at airports when the metal detectors beep and they presumptively say, "Oh, you've got a metal hip". "No", I reply, "I'm wearing a belt".

What makes you angry?

The spatially unaware frustrate me. I think angry may be too strong a word. On buses and trains, commuters are told to

"move right down inside the carriage", but nobody ever does.

If you were Prime Minister, what would you do to improve things for disabled people?

I'd abolish the separatist special schools and special education within mainstream schools. We're fighting for integration of disabled people into "mainstream" society because non-disabled children are taught that disabled children are different. This is done through curricular isolation.

What invention could make your life better?

A year-long summer in London would be incredible. I've just experienced my first UK summer; it's now the last day, and summer's already packing his bags, and heading south. I sure hope he stays for one last coffee...and a biscuit.

What do you like most about dance and choreography?

It's the only job that allows me to have a wacky sense of self. I think in very abstract ways, and dance gives me the portal and the freedom to be able to do this in a totally supportive, non-judgemental working environment.

What do you like least about it?

When my body doesn't do what I'm telling it to do. This sometimes causes frustration, and I don't like associating frustration with something I love.

Who's your favourite disabled person ever?

The folk I work with are pretty cool. I don't want to give reasons, as I'd have to use terms like, "brave", "strong", "inspirational", "determined", "against all odds", "in the face of adversity", and they would not like that at all.

Do you have any special or hidden talents?

I apparently do have hidden talents, but you'd have to ask me that question again after this glass of wine.

→ Who do you think is One to Watch?

Send us your nominations for likely lads and lasses who could answer our questions. They can be rising stars in any field of entertainment, business, the media or beyond

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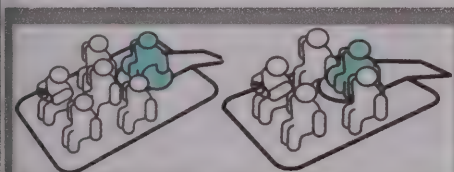
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Is this the face of 2012

Paralympian, television presenter, actor; Ade Adepitan is firmly established as one of the country's most recognisable disabled people. He talks to **Paul Carter** about his life, from his early days growing up in the East End of London, through to being the figurehead for Channel 4's groundbreaking coverage of the London Paralympics in 2012



Determination is a word carefully used by disabled people, conjuring, as it sometimes does, patronising stereotypes and tales of triumph over tragedy.

However, when speaking to Ade Adepitan, it is a word that could not be more apt. The former Great Britain wheelchair basketball player turned actor and television presenter is set to cement his position as one of the country's most recognisable disabled people through Channel 4's coverage of the Paralympics.

However, his rise to fame was not without its setbacks, requiring plenty of commitment and resolve along the way.

Originally born in Lagos, Nigeria, Ade came to Britain aged three, settling with his parents in east London.

He describes growing up as a black, disabled child in the East End in the 70s and 80s as "an experience".

"I didn't fit the norm," he explains. "Most of my mates at school were mods and listened to Madness and were dressed in pork pie hats and long coats and stuff like that. I came in with pink chequered flares and a frilly shirt and a massive afro and demanded if I could be allowed to play football."

This early passion for sport would be something that would not only help him to overcome initial prejudices, but that would also go on to shape the rest of his life.

"When I first asked to play football they said no, they weren't having it, but I convinced them. I went in goal and made this miraculous save – I had great hand eye co-ordination and that immediately changed a lot of things.

"The fact that I was black, the fact that I was disabled, all of that just totally went out of the window. Everyone focused on the fact that the kid with the bad legs was an amazing goalkeeper. I think that gave me the



I had this really crazy, skewed, ignorant view of disability. I didn't consider myself as being disabled, because I was around able-bodied kids. I'd never seen any disabled kids

confidence to really enjoy school and I became quite a cocky, confident kid simply because of sport and from being the last player to be picked to being one of the first to be picked."

Ultimately, it would prove to be wheelchair basketball and not football that would have the greatest impact on his future, eventually taking him to two Paralympic Games and culminating in a bronze medal in Athens in 2004.

As a schoolboy, Ade was spotted by two physios working with a junior basketball team in London, who

approached him to take up the sport.

He describes his initial reaction to the suggestion as "pretty hostile".

"I wasn't really interested in it at all," he explains.

"I had this really crazy, skewed, ignorant view of disability. I didn't consider myself as being disabled, because I was around able-bodied kids. I'd never seen any disabled kids. Fortunately for me the two physios came to my school and convinced me to go to Stoke Mandeville to watch the Junior Games.

"I went there, and was initially overwhelmed by seeing so many people with disabilities. Then I saw some of the guys from the GB wheelchair basketball team and I was blown away by their abilities, blown away by the talent. When I saw these guys they were the total opposite of what I expected to see – they were athletes, they had fantastic physiques."

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At the tender age of 18, Ade tried unsuccessfully to be selected for the national squad, something that only seemed to drive him on further to become a success. At 20, he was offered a professional contract to play for Real Zaragoza in Spain, where he spent two years.

Despite this obvious early promise, it would be eight years before Ade pulled on a GB vest, something which he remains philosophical about.

"The journey to becoming a Paralympian made me who I am today. It changed me, it made me more mature, it made me take more responsibility for who I am and become a much stronger person, because it was a tough journey.

"In a way, I'm disappointed that I didn't get selected when I was 18, and I'm disappointed that I didn't get selected for Atlanta when I was 22, but I'm also happy because those disappointments, those setbacks, made me a stronger, more determined person and by the time I was 26 and got selected for the Sydney Paralympics – first of all it was a huge relief, secondly it was the most amazing moment of my life.

"I wish I could find that letter, if I could find it I would treasure it and I would frame it up on the wall because that letter represented 12 years of pain, of hard work and dreaming of being an elite athlete. It was the best moment. Even talking about it now makes me swell with pride."

Despite the obvious joy, Sydney was to ultimately be tinged with disappointment. GB lost the bronze medal with the last shot of the game in the final second snatching victory

for the USA by just one point.

"The changing room was devastation," he says. "I've never seen so many grown men in tears. It was absolutely awful that day, and I think it took us the best part of two years to recover."

Fortunately, recover they did. Following a silver medal at the world championships, GB went on to the

“It's very easy for me to sit here and wax lyrical about the Paralympics and how big an event it is but until you actually experience it, until the British public experience it – you won't know”

Athens Games in 2004 to gain revenge over the USA who had so cruelly broken their hearts in Sydney by beating them to the bronze medal.

You only have to hear Ade speak about the Paralympics to get a feeling of how important they have been in his life. With that in mind, what does he feel about the Paralympics coming to London in 2012?

"I think it's a fantastic opportunity. It's very easy for me to sit here and wax lyrical about the Paralympics and how big an event it is but until you actually experience it, until the British public experience it – you won't know.

"A lot of people talk about the cost, but to quantify it, think of the inspiration it's going to give. Imagine you're a young kid being taken by your mother or father to watch our guys win countless medals in the Paralympics

and Olympics – imagine what that feeling is going to be like, you'll never forget that for the rest of your life."

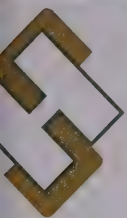
For Ade in particular, the Paralympics in 2012 will continue to be a big part of his life. He is one of the main faces of Channel 4's groundbreaking coverage, including presenting a Saturday magazine programme called *That Paralympics Show* over the next two years in the run-up to the Games.

He explains: "To have another TV channel actually bid and decide to plough millions into the coverage and increase the profile of the Paralympics I think is huge. I think it's a landmark moment. I think it's a moment we'll all look back on in 20 or 30 years and say this is the moment where the Paralympics really came of age."

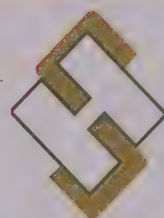
As well as presenting work for Channel 4, Ade is continuing to stay involved in sport at a high level and is currently playing competitive wheelchair tennis, and it remains a possibility that he could actually compete for GB in London in 2012.

With his wide range of television appearances, there is no doubt that viewers will be seeing more of Ade as London 2012 approaches. Asked whether he is comfortable being a role model to others, he is philosophical.

"Kids are going to see me and see what I do and they're going to want to emulate me and that's fine. The one thing I'll say is that I'm a human being, I'm not perfect, I'm far from perfect. I've got my flaws and weaknesses but I just try and live the life that I think is right and hopefully set a good example to other people. Disabled kids or not." ■



Sussex Health Care



Sussex Health Care is an award winning group of care homes that were founded in 1985. Sussex Health Care now operates 16 care homes, predominantly in the West Sussex area, providing nearly 550 beds, incorporating specialist care provision including care for older people.

Orchard Lodge, Dorking Road, Warnham, West Sussex RH12 3RZ

Orchard Lodge, just outside Horsham, West Sussex, provides care for adults with learning and physical disabilities. This specialist care home with nursing combines the latest technological facilities with a safe and comfortable environment. Activity rooms are available to all service users along with sensory and physiotherapy rooms. Hydrotherapy services are available in the swimming pool and spa with multi-purpose rooms for structured activities.

Wisteria Lodge, Horney Common, Nutley, East Sussex TN22 3EA

Wisteria Lodge in Nutley, East Sussex, caters for young people with physical and learning disabilities. The home offers superb purpose-built facilities with track hoisting throughout. Each single room provides en suite facilities. A spa pool is available to all service users along with sensory and physiotherapy rooms.

STOP PRESS
Opening in Spring 2010, we have two new services for young adults with learning and physical disabilities. The new 10-bedded purpose-built units will be at Orchard Lodge, Warnham, near Horsham RH12 3RZ and Wisteria Lodge, Horney Common, Nutley TN22 3EA.

Sussex Health Care operates the following award winning care homes:

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- BEECH LODGE (Physical & Learning Disabilities) Horsham 01403 791725
- HORNCastle CARE CENTRE (Acquired Brain Injury & Neurological Conditions) East Grinstead 01342 813910
- KINGSMEAD LODGE (Physical & Learning Disabilities) Horsham 01403 211790
- NORFOLK LODGE (Learning Disabilities) Horsham 01403 218876
- ORCHARD LODGE (Physical & Learning Disabilities) Warnham 01403 242278
- RAPKYNs CARE HOME (Adult Care & Neurological Conditions) Horsham 01403 265096
- RAPKYNs CARE CENTRE (Physical & Learning Disabilities), Horsham 01403 276756
- WHITE LODGE (Learning Disabilities) Purley, Croydon 020 8763 2586
- WISTERIA LODGE (Physical & Learning Disabilities) Nutley, Nr. Uckfield 01825 714080

For further information or to arrange a visit, please contact Corrine Wallace, Head of Operational Care Services Tel: 01403 217338 • Fax: 01403 219842 email: corrine.wallace@sussexhealthcare.co.uk www.sussexhealthcare.co.uk



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE





NOT SO HAPPY HOUR:

Ups and downs on the town

They may be young, they may be single, but are they free to go out and have a good time on equal terms? As **Cathy Reay** discovers, many disabled young adults still have to work harder than most to be where it's all happening

You're on the town and your new best mate, having just downed a vodka shot, turns to you with a brilliant idea to go to this club just around the corner that he's heard about from Liam who knows Gary on the door and it's so where it's at and you can totally get in for free.

Except it is actually really far away, there is a huge queue to get in, no seats inside, an impossibly high bar, an out of order disabled loo, aggressive lighting, rude staff, you have no idea where you are and by now you're so fed up you just want to go home.

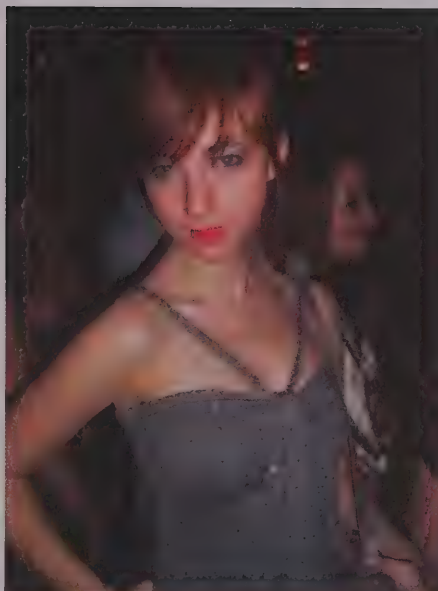
Spontaneity is such fun when you're young, it is a complete escape from the family-controlled childhood you just left behind. But for disabled young people it can be a lot harder.

In December 2009 the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign published research that showed that four in five young disabled adults don't feel they can go to pubs, clubs or bars spontaneously. Alarmingly, it also found that the same number is still experiencing difficulty using leisure facilities purely because they are disabled.

Amy Flush's condition dramatically deteriorated six years ago and since then she hasn't felt able to go out clubbing with her friends. "I miss being able to have spontaneous nights on the town. I organised this one really big night out recently but I felt so silly, on the edge of everything and not really involved.

"If I knew there were no steps, that I didn't have to ask at the bar for a key to the toilet, that I could actually get to the bar myself, that it wouldn't be overcrowded, then I might feel like going out again. But I think my time clubbing has been and gone now."

"I can never just say yes to a last minute invitation somewhere," says



Rosemarie: no seats here love

Rosemarie Buttery. "I have to check a few things, like whether it is near a bus stop or if there is seating in the venue.

"One time I called up a bar to check they had seating, they said yes but when we got there it was all in the VIP area. I asked the bouncer if I could perch on the end of a bench and he said no. I asked him to get the manager and they kept me waiting for half an hour. I felt like everyone was staring at me, thinking 'why is that girl trying to get into VIP?' I wanted the ground to swallow me up."

Liam, Rosemarie and David Gale have less noticeable impairments, and they are often discriminated against for not being disabled enough

The reality is that almost every young disabled adult has probably experienced something similar. A bar can be fantastically accessible in many ways but miss out one vital aspect and if staff won't help it can dramatically change a person's entire evening.

"People's attitudes can determine whether you have a good time sometimes rather than the actual accessibility of a place," explains Jagdeep Sehmbi. "Bouncers and

bartenders always ask my friends questions about me as if I'm not there, it's incredibly frustrating. Even if there's some sort of access issue in a venue, if good people are willing to help it makes it a lot easier. But if they aren't, it is really hard."

In December 1996 it was made unlawful for service providers to treat disabled people less favourably for a reason related to disability. But despite almost 14 years having passed, young disabled people still experience ignorant, stigmatising, lazy and rude reactions on a regular basis.

Amy recalls a particularly unkind experience: "I was out on my crutches and the floor was soaking wet. I told the manager about it, I was perfectly nice, but he was nasty. He said, 'I've had two people in wheelchairs here that have had a brilliant night' and then he threw me and my friends out!"

Clio Nixon says she'd like it if staff were trained properly in how to help customers with disabilities: "I'd like it if they were blindfolded or put in a wheelchair, to see how hard it is for a disabled person entering a new place for the first time. It would really help us but also I think it would take away any fears they have when they meet us."

Meanwhile Sulaiman Khan loves going to gigs, but is fed up of how much of a hassle everything is, from buying tickets to enjoying the show.

He says: "It's hard when you buy tickets because you basically have to decide whether to take a carer or a friend. You're segregated away from other people in venues in a disabled only space with other wheelchair-users and you can only take one person with you.

"Venues say they are accessible but what they mean is that this one part is. But putting all the disabled people in the same place feels a bit awkward at times."

Penning disabled gig goes together →

also slims chances of making new friends, though that isn't always the only thing in the way.

Rosemarie says she's shy of showing strangers her disability: "I find it awkward if you're in a club and someone is chatting you up and they ask you to dance. My left hand is quite deformed so I'm fearful that if they tried to drag me by the hand, they'd notice that.

"You're always scared they'll go 'oh ok, bye!' People are either terrified from the get go or they just say 'oh that's nothing' and then you have to explain that, actually, it isn't really nothing."

Liam Perry, who has a visual impairment that isn't immediately obvious to strangers, says even his closest friends are not aware of how much he can't see.

"I know it's ridiculous but I feel like if people really knew how little I could see they wouldn't want to do things with me.

I felt like everyone was staring at me, thinking 'why is that girl trying to get into VIP?' I wanted the ground to swallow me up

"When I meet girls I really don't want to tell them. I can picture them having to tell their friends and it being really uncomfortable and embarrassing.

"I once went back to a girl's house and suddenly realised, because of the light, I wouldn't be able to get home in the morning. I had to find my way home, in the middle of the night, in December. I had to walk for miles and miles. I nearly killed myself with how cold it was!"

It is interesting that the people with visible disabilities who talked to *Disability Now* are often made to feel "inconvenient" or a "hassle" by



Sulaiman Khan (left) with his sister at O2 Arena

members of the public or facility staff. However, Liam, Rosemarie and David Gale have less noticeable impairments, and they are often discriminated against for not being disabled enough.

David says: "I've had clubs not let me in because they think I'm drunk, just because of how I walk. I've had taxi drivers refuse me because they think I'm drunk and don't want me throwing up in the back."

"Sitting in a club a lot of people will come up to you and say 'oh why are you so miserable, come on have a dance', and I feel like I don't want to have to explain every time that I need to sit down, I'm just resting," adds Rosemarie.

"I know it is controversial but I would welcome a disability card. If you're queuing to get into a club, it would be really helpful to show it to the bouncers even if it is just to sit down inside while you wait for your friends. The card would show people you're not trying to queue-jump, or get into VIP, for any other reason than really needing to sit down."

Clio says: "It would be nice if it was the done thing in restaurants and pubs

to have menus with bigger print or in Braille. People look shocked if I say I can't read a menu; they think the fact that I wear glasses means I can read anything."

Attitudes obviously get in the way of having a good time and they need to change. The UK has a thriving, culture-hungry university and young adult population and it isn't fair that so many of them should feel unable to experience everything they want from arguably the most exciting years of their lives.

Sulaiman says: "It's just crazy when you think that because of a simple, single step inside a place a venue isn't accessible to people in powered wheelchairs. But so many places still have that step. And that needs to change." ■

• The Muscular Dystrophy Campaign's Access to Leisure Facilities research, 'Calling Time', is available at mdctrailblazers.org/campaigns/436_access-to-leisure-facilities-calling-time

• • Young, wild and free? Join the debate at disabilitynow.org.uk

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Has the Government really thought out its cuts?

I receive Disability Living Allowance, Incapacity Benefit and Winter Fuel Allowance, and I'm worried by press reports I've read about proposed changes to the benefits system.

I've had to retire early from employment because I'm in so much pain and discomfort that I find it impossible to concentrate or do the simplest of things.

My particular problem is that my health problems flare up without warning, and make it impossible for me to work. In addition, because those problems are internal, there are occasions when I seem to others to be in reasonably good health.

As a result, if an assessor were to carry out a work capability assessment of me when I wasn't in immediate pain, he or she would probably decide that I was fit to work.

If that happened, I might be offered a job and then have a flare up on my very first day, forcing me to return home and jeopardising my future employment. There must be other people in the same situation.

I'm worried that the Government hasn't thought its policy through, and that many people will be worse

off if it doesn't get the benefit changes right.

The whole disability population should therefore lobby their member of parliament, especially those of us who would be disadvantaged if work capability assessors were unwilling to take into consideration what each of us goes through on a bad day, and how many bad days we may have in a week.

Also, the whole disability population needs to get in contact with local action groups in their local area or, if there aren't any, with a national action group.

I feel strongly about this because the Government is sure to get it wrong and leave many of us worse off rather than better off.

Alan Bernstone, by email

I have spent the last hour trying to calm and reassure my wife that our benefits won't be taken from us, because we really are too sick and disabled to work. I have cerebral palsy and I'm in my early 60s. My wife is in the terminal stages of multiple sclerosis, needs 24-hour care as she can't do anything by or for herself, and feels extremely vulnerable.

She'd heard on the BBC

news today that Chancellor George Osborne wanted to take yet another £2.5bn off the welfare budget by cutting benefits to those who are too sick and disabled to work.

I really wish this cruel and malicious government would stop its threats to sick and disabled people. Yes, there are people on welfare who are work-shy and shouldn't be on it; and there are disabled people on welfare who want work but can't find any. It is these groups who should be targeted, not those who need the support of the health service and welfare state because they are so sick and disabled that work is an impossibility.

Even if Osborne's apparent desire to hurt the most vulnerable in society has been quashed by Ian Duncan Smith at the Department for Work and Pensions, the very fact that his letter [proposing further cuts] was written in the first place indicates the duplicity and depravity of this millionaires' government. Its efforts to assure those who are sick and vulnerable that they will continue to be supported and nurtured by the state are mealy mouthed and vacuous.

Those trade unionists

who are declaring industrial action to save their jobs and services must also remember to include those who rely on their services, for the fight for decent living standards doesn't just relate to workers in public services but those who rely on public services for their standard of living.

James Elder-Woodward, Alexandria, West Dunbartonshire

With reference to the article by Anne Wollenberg ("Clegg's hidden agenda conned voters", *Disability Now*, September 2010), I wrote to Nick Clegg in February 2010 because I was concerned about rumours suggesting that there would be massive changes to Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance.

The letter I received back persuaded me that the Lib Dems were on our side in this. Armed with that assurance, I voted LibDem in the General Election.

I now feel cheated and let down. In view of what the LibDems have done in coalition, it seems to me that the letter I received from "the office of Nick Clegg" was full of untruths.

T.H. Walton, Havant, Hants



She told us she could and she can

It was good to see Shannon Murray on the cover of September's *Disability Now* and read what she has been

doing since we met in 1994.

Actually it was *Disability Now*, along with Sunrise Medical, that sponsored

Model in a Million, the first national competition for disabled models. Shannon and Jason Ward were the joint winners. The judges included Heather Mills as well as the deputy editor of *Options* magazine, and Louise Dyson, head of a model agency, who offered the winners a year's listing.

We had over 500 entrants, of different disabilities and ages, and we whittled them down to 16. Each had a ten-minute interview on judging day. The criteria went beyond appearance to personality and the ability to model in the disability field and in mainstream advertising. Louise Dyson said afterwards: "To say we have been spoilt for choice is an understatement."

Shannon, who was about to take her A-levels, said she wanted to do law and make "loads of money". She already had an eye on mainstream modelling. "I think that would be the whole point. People think about wheelchairs and stairlifts. I would want to break the convention." And so she has.

I wonder what Jason Ward is doing now.

Mary Wilkinson, former editor, *Disability Now*

The phone is important: make it work

There seems to be a lack of understanding from so-called able-bodied people when someone with a lack of hearing asks phone callers to speak slowly. What a joke that is to people with a speech impairment who can't even use a telephone.

My daughter has a profound speech impairment, which means she can't make phone calls, but finds that some firms and government departments will only communicate by telephone, not by email or letter.

Firms should employ people specifically to speak to customers by telephone, and instruct them how best to communicate with people who try to explain that they have difficulty in hearing or speaking.

I also wish that firms wouldn't insist that you only confer with them by text message. I for one am unable to use this facility due to my incapacity, and I suppose age.

Frank Alan MBE, by email

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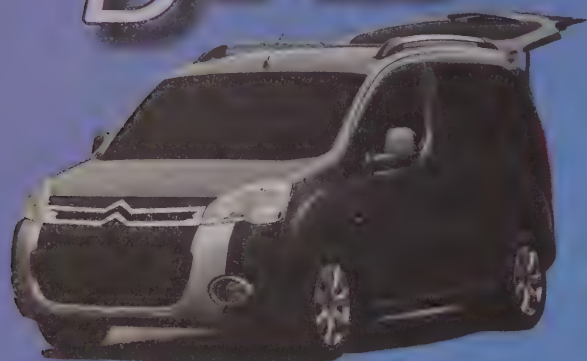


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Shedding the invisibility cloak

It's a sign, says **Andy Rickell**, of the erosion of our rights that the recently elected Government needs to be reminded of who and what we are

In 1997, the new Labour Government had learnt that the power of the disability lobby in the mid-1990s had beaten the previous Conservative Government on the issue of disability rights, so they came into office with a manifesto commitment to comprehensive disability rights and a programme for taking it forwards. This led to a whole series of advances on the disability rights agenda.

In 2010, the world is very different and disabled people are in danger of becoming invisible and being the victims of the current political situation.

The politicians see the economic situation and reducing public expenditure as priorities. They are right, but the specific needs of disabled people are likely to get overlooked as part of the "bigger picture". In any case, disabled people are the biggest users of state support so we are potentially in the firing line.

The visibility that disabled people got from the 1990s rights campaigns is lacking in 2010. And actually a false

assumption is made that our silence shows our rights have been successfully tackled. I wish!

When our issues were raised in the election campaign we were the problems – the vulnerable and needy objects of social care funding, the scroungers who need to be in work, the reason why respite care was needed for our tired carers. It felt like the last 20 years had not

For the new Government to find themselves facing non-disabled people representing our issues just magnifies our invisibility

happened. The only truly positive mention of our right to independent living was David Cameron's two references in the debates about the value of direct payments.

What's to be done? Well, we need to raise the profile of disabled people politically, and we need to show how our issues, if properly

addressed, can address politicians' priorities too.

We need national disabled people's organisations (DPOs) visibly back on the map. Whilst the non-DPO disability lobby is not as bad as it once was, for the new Government to find themselves facing non-disabled people representing our issues just magnifies our invisibility other than as the objects of other people's interests.

We need to be working with government to advise on how to make savings intelligently. Properly informed welfare reform could be brilliant for improving disabled people's opportunities in employment – done badly it could increase our poverty disastrously. Properly re-engineered social care systems and other sources of support to disabled individuals could save significant public money on administration by single

The visibility that disabled people got from the 1990s rights campaigns is lacking in 2010. And actually a false assumption is made that our silence shows our rights have been successfully tackled. I wish!

assessment processes, and substantially improve outcomes for disabled and older people if individual budgets are implemented radically. We should share our expertise in being aware of where public money is effectively spent on our behalf, and where it is not, and where it could be better spent.

And sometimes we may need to campaign on the streets again – no bad thing!

→ Have your say

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- email us editor@disabilitynow.org.uk
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Occupational therapist with interest in housing

Motoring and Transport HELEN DOLPHIN

Works with Mobilise and specialises in matters to do with cars

My carer husband needs support too

Q I have carers and struggle to maintain an active social life, but my struggle is being thwarted by a Saturday social club set up only for disabled adults with unpaid carers, i.e. wives and husbands. They'll let me in when I'm with my 56-year-old husband, who's my main carer and looks after me 22 hours a day, but not when I'm with my other carers who are there to support him in caring for me. It seems unfair that my husband is not allowed any freedom away from his caring role. I don't think this is right, as everybody is entitled to a break. Even able-bodied married couples have breaks from each other. Why shouldn't couples with disabled partners?

Name supplied



Simon Parritt says: You seem to have two

issues. The first is that your husband's role as main carer puts a strain on your marital and loving relationship as a couple. This is a problem that many people face and a reason why some disabled people remain in a separate living situation from their lovers

or close partners: for fear of losing social service support.

One piece of research I read showed that relationships can sometimes be more stable and satisfying when a disabled person and a non-disabled person don't actually live together full-time. This may be because the roles of carer and partner remain separate. With a partner always present, there is always less support offered both physically and financially from outside, be that the state or voluntary sector.

I therefore suggest that your husband and you look into respite care, if you are eligible. It would give your husband a break and also give you time off, if only for a week every now and then.

The second issue is your lack of a social life. Is this Saturday club your only option? Have you tried more mainstream clubs and activities that might interest you, without your husband? Just because they're not specifically for disabled people, it doesn't mean you can't use them.

In fact, looking outside into the wider community may be the best course of action to make you feel more included and fulfilled.

It sometimes takes a little

effort to persuade and cajole organisations to be inclusive and support your access needs, but it may prove worth the time.

How many doctors' notes must I produce?

Q I'm diabetic and I'm increasingly being asked for doctors' letters before taking part in activities. To get a body massage at Center Parcs I had to provide a doctor's letter and now the Open University is asking me for one as well. These are just two examples. There is a charge of £22 per letter. Should disabled people have to foot this bill or should the organisation asking for the letter cover the cost? It doesn't seem fair that disabled people have this added cost. What are my rights?

Ellen Chapman, by email

Agnes Fletcher replies:

It does seem unfair that so many people are asking you for doctors' letters. I can't see why the Open University should have any particular interest in your diabetes or need you to prove that you have it, if that is what they are doing – unless, perhaps,



you are applying for disability-related grants or other support. Then, where there is a cost to them, it may be reasonable for the provider to ask for such information, though good practice would be not to.

When it comes to quasi-medical treatments, service providers may be concerned about liability if you sustain an injury (diabetes can mean reduced sensation in your feet, for example).

In all cases, can I suggest you first politely challenge the need for a doctor's letter? It may be that you are coming up against old policies that need to be revised in the light of the new Equality Act or even the earlier Disability Discrimination Act.

In the case of particular treatments, perhaps you could sign a form saying that you consent to treatment and will not hold the provider responsible for any problems as long as the treatment is correctly delivered.

Another option might be to pay for one doctor's letter, addressed "To Whom It May Concern", giving a full outline of your condition, how it affects you and any precautions you need to take. You can then make copies which should last you through various scenarios and over several years.



PALUS MICHALIS / SHUTTERSTOCK

Paphos Castle: dismantled by Venetians, rebuilt by Ottomans, adored by tourists

Can I rent a wheelchair-accessible car in Cyprus?

Q Next year, I intend to take three people to Cyprus, and visit Paphos, in the south west, and Polis in the north west. Two of the travellers will be wheelchair-users and I'll need to pick up an adapted vehicle at Paphos International Airport. Can you kindly help me locate a company that can rent me a suitable car or van for a week?

Trebor Wyn Roberts, by email



Helen Dolphin responds:

A company called Paraquip (paraquip.com.cy) provides wheelchair-accessible vehicles for airport transfers and puts on excursions. These accommodate two wheelchair-users and four

non-disabled passengers, but they come with a driver. As for doing your own driving, I've been unable to find any hire company who would supply a self-drive vehicle. However, it would be worth contacting Paraquip as they would have more local knowledge.

→ If you have a question for our panel

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pete's place

It's **THE Sun** what's done it!



It doesn't take the nose of a highly skilled fraud investigator to sniff out what looks like an orchestrated campaign to brand us all cheats, says **Peter White**

So: as predicted in this column, the witch hunt is on. "Disabled sponger filmed felling tree"; "Wheelchair-bound benefits cheat caught jiving"; "Female darts champion too disabled to work".

The Sun, The Mail, The Express – with a little more circumspect help from some of their broadsheet confrères – have happily jumped on the bandwagon

to help Mr. Cameron fulfil his pledge to "declare war on benefit cheats".

In the summer months I've counted around 30 such stories, all with two underlying themes in common: that there's an accepted evidence that disabled people "as a group" are on the fiddle, and that any indication that a disabled person who is claiming benefit is doing anything other than lie in a

darkened room weeping into their pillows, is somehow a fraud!

It's significant that all the inquiries I've made to those policing benefit fraud have always yielded the assurance that cheating based on disability, as compared with other aspects of benefit theft, is tiny! So: if this is not the case, it's time that governments – and they've all done it over the past twenty years – actually produced some hard and fast statistics, instead of goading papers into the kind of lynch law mentality

which invites readers to snitch on their neighbours, join anti-fraud blogs, and spew out their small-minded bile at the thought that someone who is disabled may not be living in total, and presumably appropriate, misery.

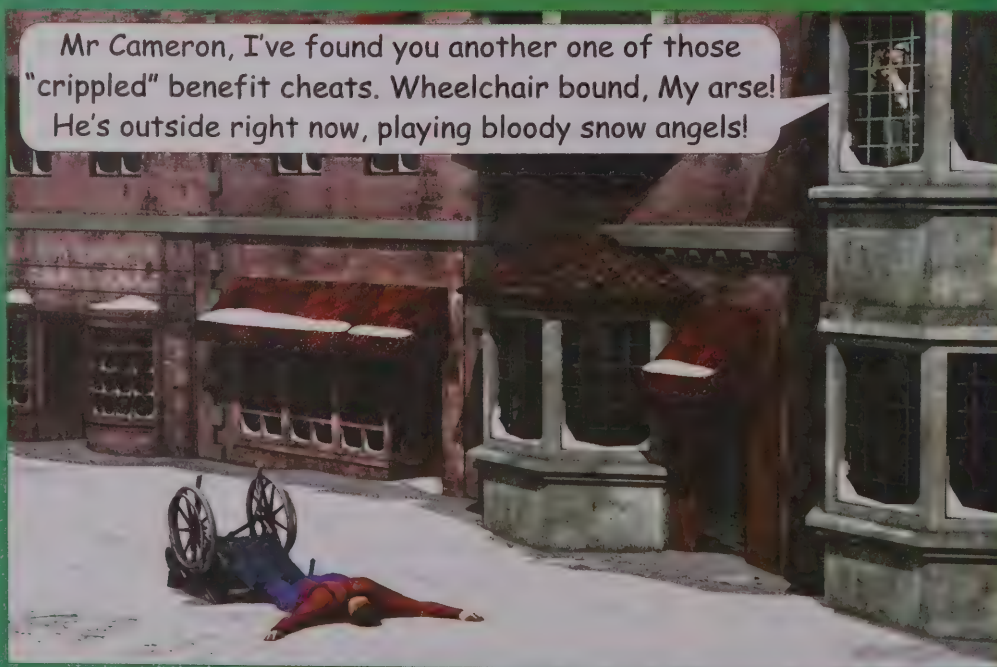
So: does the fact that these papers have managed to find a few stories of cheating show that it's rife? Not at all, it shows that they've told their reporters to go out and look for them.

There are so many false assumptions in these kinds of campaigns but perhaps the most important is the idea that journalists know what a disability is, and what effect persistent pain or persistent depression can have on your ability to work.

There is a world of difference between trying to maintain a 40-plus hours a week job, plus all the travelling that involves, with having the odd night out! For those of us who remember a time when people with disabilities received no state benefit at all and who also know that the majority of disabled people have to live on well below the national average income, this kneejerk muckraking is deeply offensive! And to the politicians who allow it to happen with vague calls to arms against unsubstantiated fraud, I would say "put up, or shut up".

ed cetera

Mr Cameron, I've found you another one of those "crippled" benefit cheats. Wheelchair bound, My arse! He's outside right now, playing bloody snow angels!



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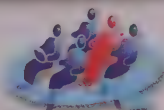


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guestcolumn

Paralympics: the class question

Having just come back from the IPC World Championships after winning gold in the S3 50m backstroke, **Fran Williamson** is able to say she's one of only 12 world champion swimmers in Great Britain in 2010. But what makes her rarer and more unique is her level of impairment

Paralympic sports are divided into classifications, based upon how an athlete's impairment affects their ability to perform and compete. At the Beijing Paralympics in 2008 I was one of only around 445 athletes who would be classified as a "lower class" athlete (more severely physically impaired) in the entire 4,000 strong Paralympic "family". Moreover, I am now one of only two lower class swimmers on the British team.

I suppose such facts may come as somewhat of a shock, especially as the Paralympic movement has gathered significant momentum over the last ten years. More people than ever have watched some form of Paralympic sport, and some are now able to name one or two Paralympians. However, whilst such developments are fantastic for the overall energy of disability sport, it could be said that the movement has moved away from the foundations on which it was built. Indeed, it is visible that Paralympic



sport, on the whole, is experiencing a gradual decline in participation within the lower classes. With fewer athletes like me coming up through the ranks to international level, more

Such an approach creates a catch-22 predicament - no lower class athletes means fewer events, fewer events means no lower class athletes

Paralympic events are being discontinued due to lack of numbers. Additionally, with the media having a remarkable impact on the attitudes and knowledge of

the general public, it is important that all athletes, with all levels of impairments, are represented. However, the tendency to steer away from showing images of athlete's impairments and making them appear as non-disabled as possible is all too clear. Therefore, it seems that efforts are made to avoid talking to, or about, athletes whose impairments cannot be hidden – which thus rules out the portrayal of the lower classes. Again, this will have a significant impact on the motivation of potential lower class athletes. If we are not represented in the media, young people will not be aware of the opportunities sport

can bring.

Thus, it can be argued that Paralympic sport bears witness to some, perhaps inadvertent, disablist undertones whereby the higher the functional ability of an athlete the more "elite" they are considered, certainly in terms of media representation. However, such an approach creates a catch-22 predicament – no lower class athletes means fewer events, fewer events means no lower class athletes. Therefore, efforts need to be made to show young disabled people what others are doing and, consequently, what they may well be capable of too. But this cannot be done without the help of the media who need to endeavour to show all levels of impairments, even if it questions society's attitudes towards disability and sport.

My hope is that when I finally hang up my goggles in a few years time, the British team will not be lacking in lower classes that may well be able to follow in my footsteps. However, I fear this may not be the case!



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update & personal

Keeping life on track

12-year-old Danielle Bradshaw explains the choices she's made in order to chase her lifelong dream of becoming a professional athlete

During my birth my leg came out over my shoulder, so I was born with a dislocated right knee as well as both my hips. It meant that as a child I had to wear a knee brace all the time and often use a wheelchair. Growing up it really affected me, I felt like I couldn't be a normal child.

I went to two primary schools. At the first one, there was this one girl who used to trip me up, making me fall over. Her mean attitude made me feel even more upset and alone because no one there would ever hang out with me; I was constantly playing by myself with my skipping rope. I was bullied there for months before I told anyone because I just thought it would get better, but it got worse every day. So I told my parents and moved to another school, where kids were a lot nicer. My friends would stay indoors with me at playtime and get toys out for me and stuff.

When I was about nine

or ten I found out about the Paralympics and I just thought "why don't I do that?"

I felt like if I had an operation to remove the part of my leg that doesn't work I could do things like everyone else. My parents tried to talk me out of having an operation at first but we talked to a lot of doctors and they came around.

When I saw my stump for the first time it was amazing, I felt so happy and excited. I was in hospital for four days and all through it I couldn't stop looking at it.

It's not long since my operation so I'm using crutches and a wheelchair to get around. I'm going to have a prosthetic leg fitted so I can walk without crutches and then as soon as I can do that I'm going to start running. I'm planning to join a running club so that I can compete in the long distance runs.

Sadly I will be too young to compete in the Paralympics in 2012. I've been invited to the Olympic



M.E.N. SYNDICATION

Stadium for a tour which I'm really excited about, and there's talk of other things happening for me too. But what I really care about is being able to compete once I'm 16. It's a huge challenge but a good one.

I hope people will treat

me the same way now that part of my leg isn't there anymore. I don't care what strangers, what anyone else thinks; it's my body and I live with it, it doesn't bother me at all.

• Danielle Bradshaw was talking to Cathy Reay



RADA-trained actress Kitty McGeever is pragmatic about her disability: "I went blind in 2002 over a period of five months. It doesn't really impact my daily life now; I think being blind is a manageable disability. The thing that's hard work is that everything takes twice as long, it just takes more thinking about."

Perhaps Kitty is somewhat detached about her blindness because complications from her diabetes that provoked her vision-loss came at the time when her 15-month-old son Felix became very ill and died.

"For two years after Felix died I was quite ill and out of the game. When I began working again I did a one-woman show and that's where I was approached by *Emmerdale* to play Lizzie Lakely."

Now Kitty is in the rare position of being an actor with a permanent disability playing a resident character in a TV soap, and perhaps even more extraordinary, Lizzie has a love interest, provided by Bob Hope, played by actor Tony Audenshaw.

"Lizzie's a very strong, very independent person and quite opinionated but there are also chinks of vulnerability that we're starting to see. Bob is bringing out a sensitive, girly side to her that we have never seen before. I would love Lizzie and Bob to be together! And Tony is lovely to work with!"

"Lizzie is definitely breaking down boundaries for disabled people and the response I get is fantastic. I had a message the other day from a lady who said she loved watching Lizzie because her daughters, who are four and five, are going blind, and it gives her hope for their future seeing someone blind portrayed on TV just getting on with it the way Lizzie does. It helps her and her kids see that it's

What Kitty did next



Emmerdale star Kitty McGeever talks to **Lara Masters** about being blind, Lizzie Lakely and why she loves geisha girls with rockabilly hairstyles!

possible to live a normal life. I was thrilled to read that, it makes the job worthwhile.

"Lizzie uses humour as a defence and people think she's hilarious – I get a lot of mail about how much she makes people laugh which is wonderful because it's not about the disability and it's great that people are seeing someone blind on telly every day as it makes blindness acceptable."

Kitty admits to having had prejudices about disabled people and tries to "redress" the balance (excuse the pun) through her personal style: "I was guilty of thinking that blind people looked a certain way and that's why my image is more important to me now because I know that stereotype still exists."

"I have always loved shopping and clothes and have always had a very



MATT FROST

individual sense of style, but before losing my sight I slobbered about more and paid less attention to what I wore. Now I have a real enjoyment of clothes. It takes up a lot of my time and I put a lot of effort into how I dress. I'm very interested in fashion, fabric and the feel of fabrics. I have a memory of colour and I've got this fantastic colour-checker gadget which reads colours for me.

"I love 50s fashion; I have lots of 50s-style dresses but I like to urbanise

them, so I'll wear a gorgeous swing dress but then stick on my knee-high Doc Martens.

"I absolutely love the dress I have on today. It's pink with flowers and polka-dots and covered in heads of geisha girls with rockabilly hairstyles! Oh, I just had to have it! When I first got the dress, the boning didn't fit properly so I had it restructured. Now it's my favourite and evokes comments wherever I go. When I got it right and I could wear the dress I was completely over the moon!"

Every woman knows the alchemy of dressing up – how it effects the way you feel and how others react to you – but as Kitty is aware, for disabled women, image takes on a whole new meaning; resplendent in her retro frock, it looks like Kitty's the cat that got the cream! ■

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Vistas on a grand scale

In the high sierra, counting off the canyons, **Penny Batchelor** visits south-west USA for a road trip round the area's once seen, never forgotten landscapes

When I visit the US I feel as if I've gone to heaven, without the dying part. Thanks to having disability legislation way before we did in the UK, America is an accessibility dream. For my trip around the

landscapes of Nevada, Arizona and Utah I went armed with my UK blue badge – and found it afforded me the same benefits as my American counterparts. US national parks are extremely geared up for disabled visitors. Chauffeured by my friend, we

set out to see the area's canyons by road, boat and air.

A four-hour drive from Las Vegas, our canyon number one has the biblical name of Zion. This Utah National Park is less well known than the Grand Canyon, which equates to less visitors



Penny at Monument Valley Hotel

and more viewing space to yourself.

As we intended to visit quite a few National Parks on our trip we bought an annual pass for \$80. This is valid for every National Park in the US. From Spring through to Autumn visitors can only get around Zion using regular shuttle buses. The buses are wheelchair-accessible and it's well worth using them – a recorded tape plays a mine of useful history and information about Zion.

All the National Parks have a visitor centre and give out information on facilities for disabled people. These include audio-described videos, assistive listening devices and accessible paths.

Whilst the scenery from the shuttle

bus is impressive, the best way to see the scale and the depth of Zion Canyon is by taking a trail. Unfortunately I found that one trail marked wheelchair-accessible would be more suitable to a strong-armed Paralympic athlete rather than your average Joe. Getting off the shuttle bus at the last stop, called the

Temple of Sinawava, I attempted the "Riverside Walk". By the clear river it was, but the "walk" was more of a steep bumpy trail. I turned round half way and went back. Still, full marks for trying!

The drive to our hotel for the night took us through a tunnel chiselled through the canyon, complete with little windows cut through the rock so you can see where you are going. We then drove past Red Canyon: swirly-pink, whipped dessert-esque pillars of rock so spectacular that they look as if they have been created for a film set. Not so. This is natural scenery, Utah style.

National Park number two was Bryce Canyon. It's as stunning as Zion but being further away from Las Vegas has even less visitors. Presumably because of the fewer numbers, tourists can drive to its numerous viewpoints. From a scenic point of view it's very accessible – the vista of the natural bridge, where the rock underneath had eroded to create two pillars and a top, was my favourite.

The south-west USA suffers from water shortages. One solution to this in the 1960s was to dam part of the



Did you know?

Major John Wesley Powell, who led the first organised expedition down the Colorado River and who Lake Powell was named after, was a one-armed American Civil War veteran.



Did you know?

Bryce Canyon is technically not a canyon because it was carved by erosion and not a river.

Colorado River and use the canyon as a reservoir. Glen Canyon now has a recreational area called Lake Powell. I'd seen canyons by car and foot – now was my chance to see one by boat.

The white lines on the rock, which are actually rust, are nicknamed the "bathtub ring". These lines show the highest point the waters of the lake reached in 1983. Starting out in a huge expanse of lake, our cruiser toured the area as far down as

Antelope Canyon where we were so deep into the canyon there was barely enough room for the boat to turn round. Here I really got a sense of the huge scale of the canyon.

I must be one of the only people in the country who haven't seen a Western movie. Our next stop, Monument Valley, is immediately recognisable so I'm told as being the backdrop for John Wayne and his ilk battling with the unpolitically-correctly named Red Indians. One of the most famous sites is the Mittens. I didn't understand the name. Mittens? A bit of a girly name for rocks in the searing heat of the desert isn't it? That was until it was pointed out to me that

the two rocks look like... a pair of mittens with the thumbs sticking up.

Monument Valley is not a national park, it is Navajo Nation land. Native Americans own and run the one hotel within the valley, aptly called "The View" for the vista it gives residents of the Mittens and other rocks. We took a jeep tour to explore the desert and go into private land. Most of the rocks have names for their appearance – there's a totem pole, an elephant, and even a Snoopy. It takes a bit of imagination to see the likeness in some of them but once it had clicked I was well away. The Three Sisters? No problem. Elephant Butte? Yep, there's the "trunk".

Our last stop was back in national park



down roads that others can only access by shuttle bus. One such road took us to Yaki Point, which I thought gave us the best views.

The Hermit's Rest route was another road accessible to us by using our disability pass. From the Hermit's Rest point to Pima Point there's a great wheelchair trail following the rim of the canyon, offering views of the turquoise Colorado River cutting its way through the bottom. Paved and fairly flat, the accessible trail does what it says on the tin. At 1.1 miles it's manageable and you can catch the free shuttle bus back to the car if you don't want to walk or push all the way back again.

Yet my most memorable view of the Grand Canyon was from the air. As the helicopter trip we'd taken reached the canyon's rim, Holst's *Mars* from *The Planets* dramatically played through our headsets. From the air I could see how vast the Canyon is and the huge distance between the north and south rims – so wide that they even have different ecosystems.

As canyons go, this one really is grand. ■

Don't miss:

The view of the sun going down over the Mittens from the View Hotel in Monument Valley.

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Useful weblinks:

Grand Canyon National Park
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Zion Canyon National Park
nps.gov/zion/index.htm

Bryce Canyon National Park
nps.gov/bryce/index.htm

The View Hotel Monument Valley
monumentvalleyview.com

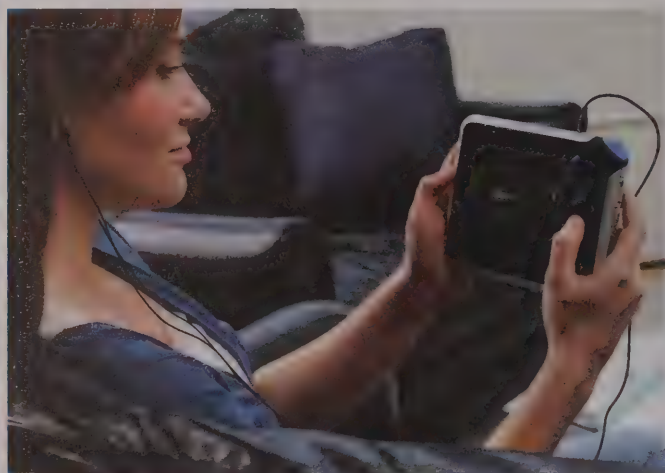
Did you know?

An odd-shaped, eroded, standing pillar of rock is called a hoodoo.

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Capturing a good read

In this, the age of the Amazon Kindle and the Sony E-Reader, **Ian Macrae** discovers that there's also an electronic reading solution for print-disabled people



For many people, nothing quite beats the pleasure of sitting down, curling up with, or sticking your nose in a good book. But also, in a world where, increasingly, information is delivered to us electronically, it's surprising how much being able to read print on paper remains a necessity.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that this only presents barriers to people who can't see. There are many physical and neurological reasons for all sorts of people finding that reading is not a straightforward option.

Enter the Intel Reader – at which point, you may be hearing in your head that annoying little four note jingle that plays

whenever the name Intel is mentioned.

The first thing to say is that this is a seriously mainstream piece of kit. About the size of a book, or of other e-readers on the market, it looks and feels good. And that's important. Too many manufacturers of specialist equipment seem happy to provide us with stuff which attracts the kind of

curious stares usually reserved for people travelling with exotic or unusual pets.

But this is more than just a stylish accessory. Import electronic text to it from a computer and it will read it to you in a warm, very authentic sounding synthetic voice which is remarkably coherent and understandable even at the kind of high speeds which practised listeners can tolerate. You can also do the same with audio, and, in a forthcoming software upgrade, you'll be able to vary the speed at which you listen to that too.

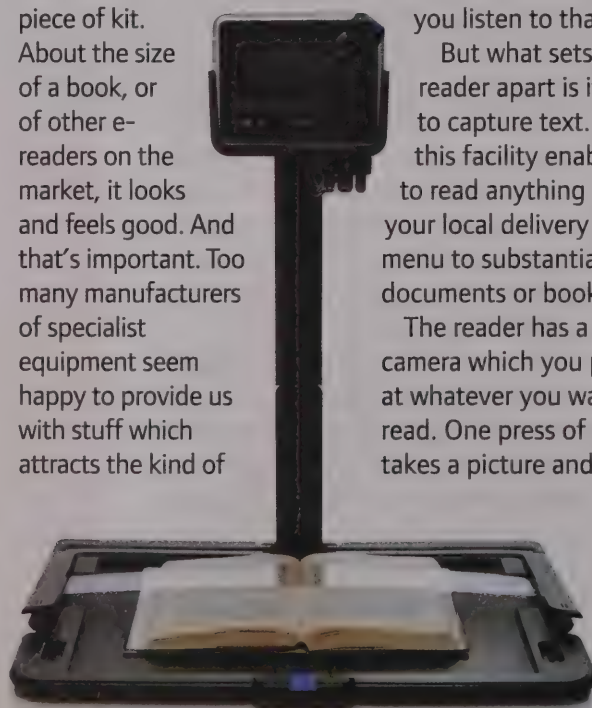
But what sets this reader apart is its ability to capture text. Using this facility enables you to read anything from your local delivery pizza menu to substantial documents or books.

The reader has a digital camera which you point at whatever you want to read. One press of a button takes a picture and seconds

later, the electronic voice is reading it to you.

With short documents, the processing speed really is very impressive. Where it runs into trouble is if you want to capture multiple pages, say, for instance, an entire book. I found that, after about 120 pages, the image store was full and the processing speed was struggling to produce text quickly enough for me to start capturing pages again.

The Intel Reader's portability is somewhat compromised by the "capture station" which it's advisable to use if you are capturing a long document. While this does give real stability and makes accurately positioning the text under the camera easy, it does require a good sized table-top space on which to rig it. Having said that, it's also possible to use the reader hand-held and on the fly to get remarkably accurate readings of things like letters, bills or that ever-handly pizza menu.



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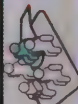
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helen dolphin

Rocky mountain highs

Over the summer, **Helen Dolphin** married her husband Paul and they honeymooned in Canada. In a departure from her normal column, she reflects on the transport and other experiences on offer north of the 48th parallel

As our flight from Heathrow to Vancouver was at 11.00am we opted to stay the night before in a hotel and catch the early morning shuttle bus to the airport.

On arrival at the Air Canada check-in desk, I was pleased to hear that a seat with extra legroom had been reserved for me and our flight went according to plan. Both my wheelchair and I arrived unscathed!

Due to the nine-hour time difference we arrived in Vancouver at roughly the same time that we left Heathrow. Feeling rather jet lagged we made our way to the Skytrain which takes passengers into the city. Although there are narrow gates to stop people stealing luggage trolleys I just had to press a button and the gate opened for me. The Skytrain took us within

100 metres of our hotel.

On our first day we set off to see Vancouver's Stanley Park. There are approximately 120 miles of trails and roads in the park so we only managed to cover a very short distance on foot. In the middle of

the park is an aquarium and I was very excited to discover that one of the dolphins was called Helen!

Overlooking Vancouver are the North Shore Mountains, one of which is Grouse Mountain. To get to the mountain we boarded a

SeaBus to the north shore and then a bus to get us to the bottom of the mountain. Unfortunately, the driver forgot I was on the bus so one of the other passengers had to run after him and ask him to put the ramp down. We then boarded the cable car up to the top. It was raining on top of the mountain but we still saw a very entertaining lumberjack show and rode a chairlift to the peak.

On 1st July it's Canada day which is a national holiday. There are many processions through the streets and we decided to go to Granville Island to watch the carnival. To get there we first caught a bus and then boarded a water taxi, which is a small boat. It seemed in Canada the wheelchair just wasn't a problem and the water taxi driver just helped push me on.

One of the highlights of





PICTURES BY PAUL DOLPHIN

Clockwise from top left: Brown bear spotted at Lake Louise; view from Rocky Mountaineer; Eagle at Grouse Mountain; Maid of the Mist at Niagara Falls

our trip was a two-day journey on the Rocky Mountaineer, which is a train that takes you through the Rocky Mountains. As it was our honeymoon, we were travelling Gold Leaf and we were cooked gourmet meals and got to travel in a carriage with a glass roof. To my amazement, the train also had an internal lift. The train ride was a fantastic way to see some of Canada's amazing scenery and wildlife and we spotted mountain goats, eagles, ospreys and even a black bear.

After two days travelling, with an overnight stay in Kamloops, we arrived in Calgary. Here we picked up our hire car and drove to Lake Louise, going via the Bow Valley Parkway where we saw even more wildlife. We stayed at Lake Louise for four days and whilst we were

there we tried out a hot spa, visited Moraine Lake, trekked to Johnston Canyon – which was a bit of a challenge for Paul to push me to as the path was rocky and steep,

In the middle of the park is an aquarium and I was very excited to discover that one of the dolphins was called Helen

and went up on a chair lift where we saw a grizzly bear eating dandelions.

I was sorry to leave Lake Louise as it is one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen but we had to continue on our journey. On our way back to Vancouver we stopped overnight in Lac Le Jeune. The hotel where we stayed had bear paw prints

on the window and a beaver dam in the lake just behind.

Our drive to Vancouver was really easy and as navigator it didn't pose me that many problems as it was basically the same road the entire way – the Trans Canada Highway. The hardest part was finding where to drop the car off in Vancouver as the car rental company had been told to take down their signs.

This time we only stayed in Vancouver for one night before heading to the airport to catch our flight to Toronto. To make life easier we got a taxi and I was amazed at how quick and easily the driver wheeled me up the ramps and tied down the wheelchair – maybe British cabbies could learn from this!

Our flight to Toronto was a little more exciting as the plane had an aborted landing

when we were about 50m from the ground. Another plane was still on the runway so our plane had to divert. To get to our hotel we boarded a coach, which was fitted with an accessible lift.

In Toronto, we went up the CN tower where I jumped on the glass floor. We had also booked ourselves onto a mini bus trip to Niagara Falls. Although the mini bus was not accessible we were told this when we booked so to get on board Paul just gave me a piggyback. At Niagara Falls we took a ride on the Maid of the Mist and got completely soaked.

Our trip to Canada was amazing and I was sorry to return home. Not only does Canada have breathtaking scenery but they have made it easy for people with disabilities to travel around and see it.

Brit Norfolk fails final test at US Open

Britain's Peter Norfolk (pictured right) lost his long-standing grip on the US Open quad singles title after being defeated in the final by American David Wagner in New York.

Norfolk, Britain's most successful wheelchair tennis player, went down 6-0, 2-6, 6-3 to Wagner, the first time that "the Quadfather" has ever finished runner-up at a Grand Slam tournament.

The score failed to completely tell the story of the match, which was eventually spread over two days after torrential rain forced the abandonment of play on the Sunday. However, the rain came slightly too late for the British and world number one, after Wagner had stormed through the first set to take a surprisingly emphatic 6-0 lead.

When the match finally resumed on Monday, Norfolk looked much more commanding against an opponent he had already beaten previously in the tournament.

The two-time Paralympic champion was still struggling to find his rhythm with his service game, an inconsistency that plagued him throughout the tournament,



but after breaking the American went on to gain the first service hold of the second set to take a 3-1 lead.

Norfolk went on to extend that margin to 5-1 before Wagner pulled one game back, but the Briton brought up two set points with his first ace since the resumption of play in the

next game.

A double fault saw Norfolk's second set point disappear, but he eventually levelled the match on his fourth set point to force the decider.

Norfolk, playing in only his second tournament since returning from paternity leave, began the final set well, though

still found difficulty finding consistency with his serve.

It wasn't long before the momentum started to swing in the American's favour and Wagner opened up a 4-1 lead as Norfolk's bid for a third US Open title slowly disappeared.

Wagner finally wrapped up his first US Open title and his first Grand Slam title after an hour and 28 minutes of play, with Monday's final two sets lasting just short of an hour.

"Peter's a fighter and he's always going to fight back but it means so much to win at home like this," said Wagner.

Norfolk said he felt his own performance had let him down.

"I held back instead of just hitting it, and David closed it out," he said.

Britain's players had more success at the Tennis Canada International Wheelchair Tennis Championships, gaining victories in all seven events they were involved in. Gordon Reid, Lucy Shuker and Jamie Burdekin took the men's singles, women's singles and quad singles titles respectively at the event in Montreal.

Local knowledge. National disability expertise.

Scope Response is the first contact point for all enquiries about Scope, cerebral palsy and disability issues.

A free and confidential service, it offers information, advice and support to all disabled people and their families.

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On the square: Liberty 2010 reviewed

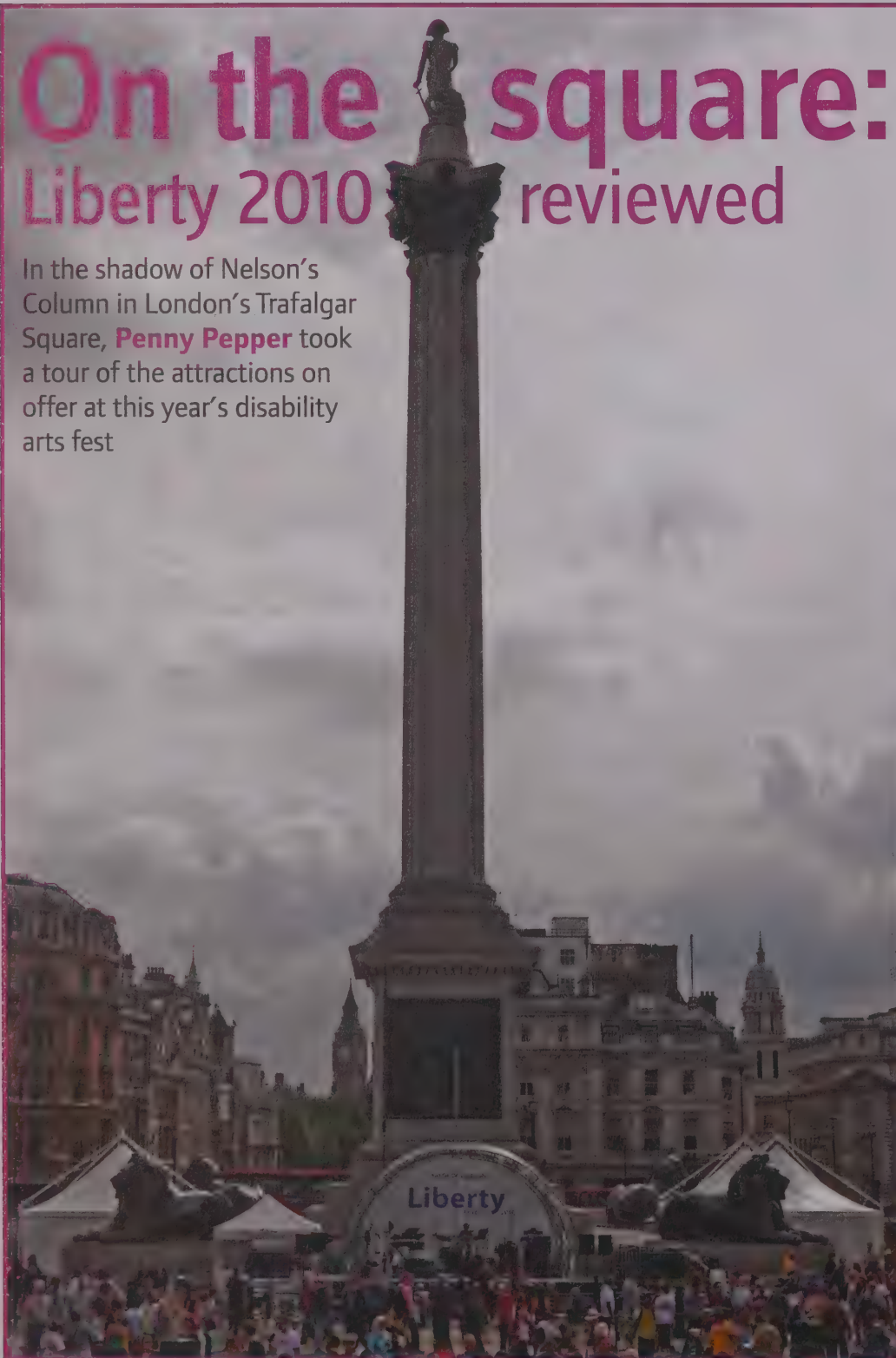
In the shadow of Nelson's Column in London's Trafalgar Square, **Penny Pepper** took a tour of the attractions on offer at this year's disability arts fest

The weather was kind to Liberty 2010, apart from the odd smattering of drizzle and this meant in the first instance hordes of tourists could be relied upon to congregate, and secondly, it makes for a whole different atmosphere for the performers.

One of the difficulties with the festival is that many of the performances happen simultaneously. I scooted around in a loose clockwork fashion, sampling as many as I could. I started with some young singers from the Orpheus Centre on the main stage. A tough early slot, though the crowds were pleased and the singing was decent enough, particularly the male lead. One small criticism; why the dull dressing down in black?

Cheering on the redoubtable Rhinestone Rollers for fun line dancing through the ages from a wheelchair, I was encouraged to see the crowds joining in when urged. And a good giggle was had by all. I was filled with some optimism in seeing the long drop of steps and beyond, lined with many different folk being led by a disabled dance troupe and enjoying every minute.

I edged my way back to the main stage to see what



JAMES O. JENKINS



ALL PICTURES BY JAMES O. JENKINS

Clockwise from top: Epic Arts; Cirque Nova; Francesca Martinez; Mandy Colleran of the Rhinestone Rollers



was a definite highlight of the day, Graeae's taster of the forthcoming *Reasons to Be Cheerful*, a musical theatre piece using the lyrics of Ian Dury. With tight musical accompaniment and tremendous palpable energy, the several cast members dressed in post-punk sleazy glam blasted away any hints of rain.

I caught some of the comedy/spoken word in the swish cabaret tent space. Keith Currie was a superb poet and deserved a better

response than he got from the indifferent early arrivals. Others, including CoolTan Poets, fared better but this is not an appropriate space for the more traditional type of poetry reading, particularly when scheduled alongside high energy comedy blasts including cheeky chat delivery from Steve Day and reliable crip sharp silliness from Liz Carr as MC.

There was a great vibe this year at Liberty, from the crowds, and from the

performances. As with much work defined as "disability art" it is hard to know what Liberty is, where it sits – or indeed if we need to pin it down to be anything. I felt pride in sharing the event with disabled people I know and disabled people I don't – and in simply being there and enjoying a varied range of entertainment with large numbers of disabled people

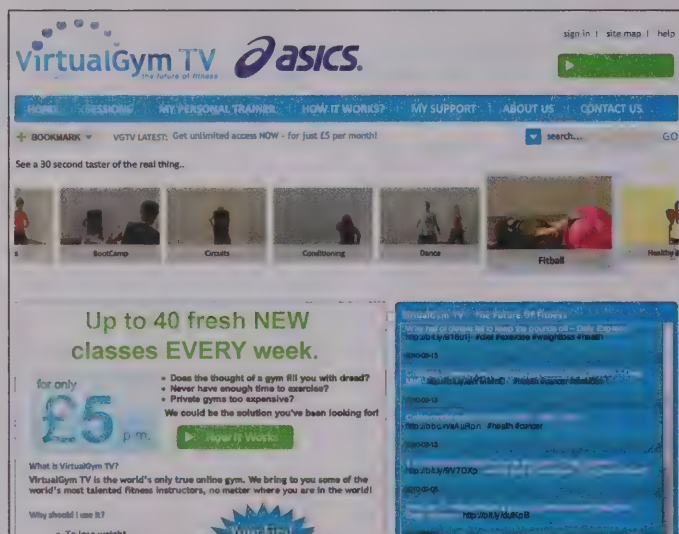
and non-disabled people. It is difficult to say what "people" – away from those of us linked consciously to a sense of the disability movement – make of it all. But from what I saw and felt, I believe this Liberty succeeded more than ever in retaining a broad crip identity while entertaining the general throng.

→ Up-to-the-minute listings

For all the latest arts listings visit
www.disabilitynow.org.uk/entertainment/arts

If lack of access has been your reason for not going to your local gym, **Kelly Mullan** points out that this may no longer be a valid excuse

The online class that had the welcome side effect of a workout for the facial muscles involved in grinning and gurning was called Street Dance and promised: “Chris is going to break down and teach you all the moves for you to be able to shake it like Beyonce, pop it like Usher and glide like Justin.”



As a cancer patient with bipolar disorder there's a list as long as my face of reasons why I should be getting fit: exercise may decrease risk of cancer recurrence by 50 per cent, would doubtless improve my post-mastectomy body

I had a few false starts with the Virtual Gym. The

Then I was looking forward to doing some yoga but found that the Virtual Gym only offers prenatal yoga and post-natal yoga. Then it took me a while to figure out how to download the videos: this delay could've been avoided if I'd visited the "How It Works" page of the website.

Finally, I found something to motivate me to exercise: I offered to review a virtual gym for webwatch and the haunting image of a blank page in *Disability Now* scared me into action. It worked but it's not a long-term motivational tool.

- virtualgym.tv – subscription rates: £5 per month, £14 per quarter, £25 per half year or £45 per year

- write to us Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW
- email us editor@disabilitynow.org.uk
- phone us 020 7619 7323

worklife



This sporting worklife

Adam Rigby is on a mission to take the growing sport of wheelchair rugby league out of the heartlands of the North West and make it nationwide. He talks about balancing the needs of sport and work

I first got involved in wheelchair rugby league through a friend of mine. I go to church in Wigan, and one of my friends who used to go as well saw me in my chair and asked if I like rugby league, which happened to be my favourite sport and the only one I watched. He asked if I'd ever thought about wheelchair rugby, which was something I'd never even heard of at the time.

I was invited down to train with Wigan and worked my

way up through the ranks. That was back in 2006, and I've been playing ever since.

I now play with the England wheelchair rugby league team, and we've been really successful, it's been brilliant. We went to the inaugural wheelchair rugby league World Cup in Australia in 2008, where we played five and won five and subsequently won the World Cup, which was a brilliant and memorable experience.

Wheelchair rugby league is

a completely different sport to the more common form of wheelchair rugby, which is also known as Murderball. Wheelchair rugby league follows all the conventional rules of the game you'll see in the rugby Super League.

The only real difference is that there are no scrums, and all kicking is done by hand. Matches are 40 minutes each way, the same as the regular game, and we play with a rugby ball, although it is scaled down to a size 4 as

Wheelchair rugby league is a completely different sport to the more common form of wheelchair rugby, which is also known as Murderball

opposed to a regular size 5 as it is easier to catch and hold with one hand.

We train regularly – at Wigan we train every Tuesday and Sunday, while for England training we get emailed and just have to turn up! Training sessions can be in Wigan, Manchester, Bradford, Leeds – anywhere in the North West really.

We've recently been doing taster sessions elsewhere in the country, taking the game to clubs, and trying to grow the sport nationally really.

I am studying part-time at college, and also work part-time as a medical technician for the Ambulance Service.

College are brilliant in terms of my rugby, they class it as a normal absence because it's seen as representing my country so there's no pressure from that side of things.

The next England match is this October over in France. We're hoping to keep on winning and hoping to make the sport as big as we can.

• Adam Rigby was talking to Paul Carter

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WARNING

We have been warned about a scam involving people from overseas who say they want to buy a product and who offer to pay using cheques, Western Union money transfers and certified cheques. Although no *Disability Now* readers to our knowledge have been hit by this, please be particularly wary of accepting cheques from overseas. For more information, visit the Metropolitan Police website.

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2009(58)	Renault Master auto, A/C, 5 seats, Chairlift, 2,000 mls	£19,995

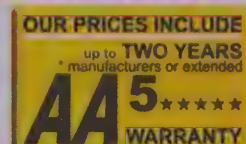
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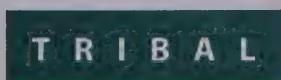
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Independent Living Support Service



Disability Coalition – Tower Hamlets (DCTH) is an established user-led organisation of disabled people based in the multicultural and diverse London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH). We provide advice and support around direct payments; independent advocacy to enable people to achieve their rights and life choices; and we campaign and lobby on behalf of local disabled people. We are driven by the social model of disability.

We are growing the organisation. In May 2010 we appointed a Chief Executive and Office Manager. We are now developing the successful Direct Payments Support Service we have delivered for the last eight years.

This expanded service should enhance LBTH's personalisation of social services, by ensuring individual budgets are effective for local people. It will offer a creative and person-centred approach that ensures that each individual is empowered and enabled to be an active participant in their own support planning process. This will be delivered through one-on-one support, workshops, the development of a new website, and ongoing development of tools, guidance and training. We are looking for the following roles:

Service Delivery Manager (£41,000)

Lead responsibility for a team of 10 people to develop (with the CEO) the transformation into and management of the new service. This is an exciting challenge to lead an enthusiastic team and develop an invaluable service at the forefront of best practice.

Knowledge and Communications Manager (£33,000)

You will develop and manage knowledge solutions, technical guides, fact sheets, newsletters, etc, and deliver printed, web and related digital strategies to connect us with our audiences. You will have or develop a deep understanding of direct payments, individual budgets and related legislation and topics.

Independent Living Worker – two positions (£28,500)

Joining an existing team of four workers, you will provide direct support to people in developing support plans, implementing them, and providing ongoing support where required. You will help disabled people achieve genuine independence and control over their lives.

Children's Direct Payments Support Worker (£28,500)

You will provide direct payments support to families of children on direct payments. A similar role to the Independent Living Worker above, but with a knowledge of the particular issues and legislation relevant to children.

Monitoring officer – part-time (£21,500 pro rata)

Direct support with individuals to enable them to provide monitoring information to LBTH on the use of their direct payments and individual budgets. Sometimes you will help clients to do this. Sometimes you will find creative ways to help individuals do the monitoring themselves.

All posts are full-time, unless otherwise stated, and are open for job share. DCTH is an equal opportunities organisation. We particularly welcome applicants who have lived experience of disability or health conditions. Because of the language requirements of many of our clients, the ability to speak Bengali/Sylheti or Somali is a desirable but not essential criterion.

We encourage you to email us on jobs@dancoalition.org.uk to receive an application pack with more information on the roles, the organisation and our terms and conditions.

Alternatively you can call Parvin Hussain, the Office Manager, on (020) 8980 2200 option 5, or write or drop into: Disability Coalition – Tower Hamlets, Disability Resource Centre, 40 – 50 Southern Grove, London, E3 4PX.

Closing date for applications: **14 October 2010**. Interviews: between 20 and 29 October, ready for a 1 December 2010 start.

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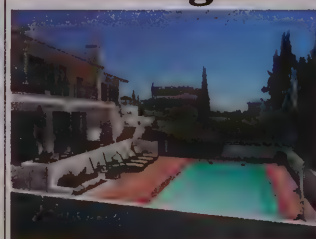
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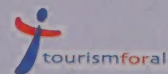
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backlash



Sneeze, fart and kick the dog

When asked whether they'd had disabled people round their's, 90 per cent of people said no. **Paul Carter** thinks he's figured out why

Let's face it, it's a pretty rubbish time to be a disabled person at the moment. It does feel a little bit like we're under siege from all sides. If it's not benefit cuts it's hysterical tales of widespread fraud in the system.

Strangely, this got me thinking, and ties in to something intriguing I read about a short while ago that's probably linked. Research carried out by Scope, (the charity which publishes *Disability Now*) suggested that 90 per cent of people, a lot by anyone's standards, had never had a disabled person in their house for a social occasion.

Well come on. It's hardly surprising is it? Considering the monumental amount of guff being tooted and parped out by the right-wing press about layabout disabled people, and the Chancellor banging on about people on benefits making "lifestyle choices" (yeah, right) we're fortunate that the wider public allow even a lucky ten per cent of us social lives. Or allow us out of our



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“If you're stupid, ignorant and bigoted, it's obvious that we're all no-mark, wasteful scrounging gits who are faking being a bit wrong to get as much as we can”

houses at all for that matter.

After all, if you're stupid, ignorant and bigoted, it's obvious that we're all no-mark, wasteful scrounging gits who are faking being a bit wrong to get as much as we can.

It's no wonder people don't want us round their

gaffs for some food and a film. We'd probably break wind at the table and sneeze in the casserole. That's before peeing on the seat, kicking your pet dog and leering at your wife. After all, that's what we're like. We're all bastards.

After dinner (which was bland and needed more salt by the way), we'd probably leave for a rehearsal with the local motorcycle stunt troupe, before squeezing in a bit of Parkour on the way home. While claiming Incapacity Benefit of course.

Obviously, there is a serious side to all this, and I don't make light

of it lightly.

It's just that if that's the way things are going to be then so be it. I quite like the idea of being a misanthropic renegade operating on the fringes of society, using my status as a disabled person as an excuse to break all socially accepted norms and moral values. Like a disabled superantihero. If that's what's expected of me than I'm happy to run with it. Metaphorically of course. I don't do running. Not unless there's a photographer from the *Daily Mail* hiding in the bushes waiting to catch me do it.

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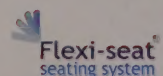
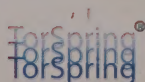
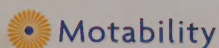
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